



Leveraging Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to Increase Climate Action in the COVID-19 Recovery in South Asian Countries

25 February 2021, Thursday – 11:00 a.m. India Standard Time (IST)

Workshop Summary/Notes

Background

Climate change and the coronavirus disease (COVID- 19) pandemic both threaten the long-term sustainability of development in Southern Asia. To respond to both of these challenges urgent and decisive government action is needed. By aligning COVID-19 recovery plans with the national climate priorities as defined in the National Determined Contributions (NDCs) they can ensure that investments in recovery interventions are contributing to short-term economic recovery as well as to long-term reorientation of economies toward a more resilient and low-carbon trajectory.

Objectives

The webinar discussed the links and opportunities for integrating climate change considerations into national COVID-19 recovery initiatives and highlighted the advantages of pursuing a low-carbon and resilient recovery from COVID-19. It also provided the participants the opportunity to share experiences on linking NDC implementation/updating and COVID-19 recovery planning.

Welcome remarks: Ms. Jacintha Tissera, SACEP
Ms. Kate Hughes, ADB

In this first session the participants were welcomed and scene setting background information was provided. The participants were encouraged to accelerate the exchange of ideas and to scale up the good practices to sustain the efforts of SACEP-member countries to support a low-carbon and resilient recovery from COVID-19. It highlighted the two generation-defining challenges the global community is facing - recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, and responding to climate change. It was also pointed out that COVID-19 tragically exposed the unpreparedness of the region to respond to economic shocks which bears the risk that the hard earned economic development in the region could be lost. Further, countries might be unable to deliver on key climate agreements if efforts to contain and recover from COVID-19 will have no deep and sustained transformational impacts. The opening session also emphasized that despite the onset of COVID-19, 2021 is anticipated to be a key year for global climate ambition, with countries due to submit new or updated NDCs ahead of COP26. There have been some significant announcements on climate ambition over the last year with around 68% of global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) now covered by net zero targets. Enhanced ambition on NDC targets as well as on a green, inclusive, and resilient COVID-19 recovery are critical. Significant climate action would require committed governments and decision-makers. Finally, deep and sustained transformational change is needed to combat climate change and deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Presentation 1: **Global and regional overview of the status of NDC updating**
Ms. Tugba Icmeli, UNFCCC

The presentation provided a global and regional overview of the status/progress of NDC updating and that it is important for countries to leverage NDC updating process with green and resilient recovery and development. It was shown that 77 out of 190 parties to the Paris Agreements have new or updated NDCs. Within the SACEP region, 3 of the 8 member countries have already

submitted their updated NDCs with complete information and details on ambition and targets as compared with their previous submissions. The presentation also mentioned that 50 submissions (out of the 77) put forward long term targets or strategies up to or beyond 2050 which are anchored around a net zero or carbon neutrality goal. The presentation also provided key examples of best practices and lessons learned on updating NDCs. It highlighted that NDCs and green recovery can be mutually reinforcing, with NDCs and long term strategies serving as building blocks to integrate ambitious climate action and COVID recovery to build back better. Further, it was mentioned that UNFCCC publishes a [NDC Synthesis Report](#) covering all updated NDCs submitted up to 31 December 2020 with a follow up version being published closer to COP26 in Glasgow.

Presentation 2: How NDCs and COVID-19 recovery connect?
Mr. Deo Gabinete, NDC Partnership

The presentation examined how countries are harmonizing NDC updating and COVID-19 recovery support. It also presented NDC Partnership's [economic advisory initiative](#) which aims to align countries' recovery efforts with climate action. These efforts are tailored along country specific requests and support is usually deployed over the a 12 months period . To date, the NDC Partnership have already deployed 22 advisors in over 18 countries and 16 more countries are in the stages of recruitment and finalization of offers. The presentation noted that countries are gearing up for green recovery, with governments considering NDCs within their stimulus plans, and technical assistance urgently needed in several areas. It further highlighted that countries need to maintain strong leadership to ensure that the alignment of climate and COVID-19 response measures will not reduce the available NDC support.

Breakout and plenary sessions

The presentations were followed by a breakout session where participants discussed on the opportunities for integrating climate change considerations into COVID-19 recovery and how priorities and activities identified in the NDC might be used to inform the countries' COVID-19 recovery plans. This was followed by a plenary session where results from the breakout groups were shared and areas countries can explore going forward to link the COVID-19 recovery and NDC implementation were discussed.

In summary, despite the difficulties faced with COVID-19, there are already three SACEP-member states which have submitted their updated NDCs (i.e, Bangladesh, Maldives, and Nepal). It is noted that almost all SACEP-member countries are aware of and have established some kind of link between climate action and COVID-19 recovery. The focus areas discuss in this regard were mainly smart agriculture and water resources management to ensure food security and renewable energy to reduce GHG. Also the prevalence of online platforms reducing the need for transport and thereby GHG emissions was mentioned. Some of the highlights of the discussions are indicated below.

Opportunities for integrating climate change considerations into COVID-19 recovery
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Increase productivity (paddy cultivation) and reduce post-harvest losses to ensure food security amidst high prices of major commodities- Promote water conservation through enhanced irrigation for water reuse and recycling for climate resilience- Intensify the use of smart agriculture practices such as on 'mechanizing' the agricultural value chain, deployment of renewable energy for agricultural use, and water recycling for domestic use

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mainstream low carbon development initiatives such as renewable energy (biomass, electric vehicle) and energy efficiency – Promote sustainable tourism – Develop enabling policies and mechanisms in the transport sector to reduce GHG – Enhance the capacity of the health sector to address needs and emergencies during disasters and calamities
<p>Priorities and activities identified in the NDCs that can be used to inform the countries' COVID-19 recovery plans</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support long-term policy changes to assist in NDC implementation – Mainstream adaptation measures to guide national and subnational medium and long-term strategies – Enhance access to climate finance (international and domestic sources) and provide support to rural development financing – Integrate COVID-19 and NDC priorities and activities in National Adaptation Planning processes – Emphasize climate change mitigation measures via emission reduction targets in the energy and transport sectors – Promote ecosystem-based adaptation measures/interventions
<p>Areas countries can explore going forward to link the COVID-19 recovery and NDC implementation</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enhance the capacity of health sector including its digitization and ensure sustainable health/hospital waste management – Enhance women's role in the agriculture and food security efforts (and encourage home gardening to enhance food productivity) – Improve agriculture and fisheries production – Promote sustainable irrigation system (from a flat irrigation to drop irrigation or sprinkler system) and distribute drought and disease-resistant crops to enhance food productivity – Enhance institutional arrangements and governance through enabling policies on renewable energy and carbon market initiatives to reduce GHG – Diversify the economy to generate multiple co-benefits to address the severe negative impacts of COVID-19 on livelihood especially to the tourism sector

Presentation 3: ADB's framework on integrating resilience and green considerations
Ms. Kate Hughes, ADB

The presentation talked about the rationale for integrating resilience and low-carbon considerations into COVID-19 recovery planning and what the benefits and opportunities for countries could be. The session also presented the [assessment framework](#)¹ developed by ADB, which countries can use when designing their green recovery measures. While available climate resilient measures may not be new, the countries' economic stimulus funds could achieve not only COVID-19 recovery but also climate and resilience but also benefits. The framework aims at assisting decision makers assess a package of measures to balance out those decisions amidst the COVID-19 pressure.

Closing remarks: Ms. Jacintha Tissera, SACEP

The closing remarks pointed out that while COVID-19 may have disrupted the process of updating NDCs or has delayed NDC submissions, the recovery from COVID-19 has become an opportunity for countries to align their recovery plans with climate goals such as those projects that may have already been identified in the NDCs to be taken forward or accelerated through the recovery

¹ ADB. 2020. [Accelerating Climate and Disaster Resilience and Low-Carbon Development through the COVID-19 Recovery: Technical Note](#). Manila.

process. They also emphasized that building back better is essential and that climate considerations need to be embedded in the process of recovery.

Annex 1. Agenda



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[Link to join](#)

Time (IST)	Activity	
11:00 – 11.05	Welcome remarks	Jacintha S. Tissera - SACEP
11:05 – 11.15	Opening remarks and context on climate action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Links between climate change and COVID-19 ▪ Implications of COVID-19 for NDC implementation and updating. 	Kate Hughes - ADB
11:15 – 11.23	Icebreaker	Facilitator
11:23 – 11.28	Global and regional overview of the status of NDC updates	Tugba Icmeli - UNFCCC
11:28 – 11.33	How NDCs and COVID-19 recovery connect? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An overview of how countries are looking to harmonize the NDCs and COVID-19 recovery support 	Deo Gabinete - NDC Partnership
11:33 – 12.18	Breakout Discussions <u>Key Questions:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What might be the opportunities of integrating climate change considerations in COVID-19 recovery? ▪ How might the priorities and activities identified in your NDC be used to inform your country's COVID-19 recovery plans? ▪ What do you see as next steps for linking COVID-19 recovery and NDC implementation? 	Facilitator
12:18 – 12.53	Share out from groups <u>Key Question:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the three areas you would like to explore going forward when it comes to COVID-19 recovery and the NDCs? 	Facilitator
12:53 – 13.03	ADB's framework integrating resilience and green considerations	Kate Hughes - ADB
13:03 – 13.23	Q&A	Facilitator
13:23 – 13.30	Closing remarks	Jacintha S. Tissera - SACEP

